

A Brief Overview of Communication and Immunication;
Being a Thesis on the Interaction between Formal and Informal Language in Acquisition and
Employment

Craig Gosse

That which follows is a highly generalized and greatly simplified overview of the conceptual theory of immunication; specifically, that within the structure required for formal communication to occur, there exists semantical gaps (or 'slots') wherein a certain and specific meaningful semantic concept should lie, but does not. In this effort, I have advisedly chosen to refer to this linguistic occlusion as 'immunication', as the term itself serves as a self-demonstrating example; something which will be expanded upon further within this treatise.

With immunication defined as being correlating feature of formal language, however, it is advantageous to first briefly examine the assumptions and prerequisites of formal language required to permit the concept of immunication to exist. As such, it should first be noted that the use of 'formal' in this context refers not to ritualized or specifically stylized use, but to the literal semantic meaning of the word; i.e., pertaining to the form thereof.

The primary assumption upon which immunication lies is that, while it is generally accepted that the initial lexicon of any given protolanguage is arbitraryⁱ, the resulting extension and use of symbolic representation that constitutes formal language is notⁱⁱ; as corollary, the secondary assumption is that the resulting subjective symbolic model – a grammatically organized syntactic expression - is either derived from, or at least tangentially relates to, some objective referenceⁱⁱⁱ.

In North American English, that which covers or encloses and automobile engine is known as a *hood*^{iv}; in British English, it is referred to as a *bonnet*^v; and, in both variations of the language, that which covers or encloses and aircraft engine is called a *cowling*^{vi}. While the specific symbol denoting the object in question arbitrarily differs, the semantic meaning of all three – the semantic 'slot' into which all three equally fit – is specifically that of 'a head covering'. In terms of comparing the symbolic representation to the objective reference, this can be further extended linguistically by the fact that what is being covered is referred to in all variations of English as the cylinder head.

The same concept may be used in examining compound words; otherwise arbitrarily designated symbols combined to indicate a likewise interdependent syntactic meaning. Taking the word 'unbelievable' as the subject of dissection and examination, the first step would be to understand the root representational symbol *lief*; the meaning of which is "dearly, gladly, or willingly", from the Old English *leof* ("dear, valued, beloved, pleasant"), which in turn derives ultimately from the Proto-Indo-European **leubh-* "to love, care, desire"^{vii}. This is the same root – and indeed, semantic tree – from which the word 'love' derives; thus there is no great semantic difference between the now archaic "I would as lief (do something)" and the modern "I would love to (do something)". The sense of a willing acceptance remains in both cases.

When deconstructing, as one must, from the center outward, the word ‘unbelievable’ takes as a base *lief*; prefixes it with *be-* (the state of existence); follows this combination with *-able* (a capacity to); and recursively prefixes it all with *un-* (a possibility not currently applicable)^{viii}. Reconstructing the semantic meaning thus provides us with “not able to exist in a state of willing acceptance”, which precisely matches the usage most commonly acquired contextually; whether treated as the sum of its parts, or a single and separate conceptual whole, the meaning remains the same.

Despite usage and meaning being identical, however, there is a significant difference between the constructive formal acquisition of a word and the contextual informal acquisition; a fact that can quite clearly be demonstrated by the word ‘nonchalant’. While the word itself is in fairly common usage, the root from which it derives from is only but rarely mentioned in any form but a humorous notice of the lack thereof; it is treated as a singular concept rather than the combination of *non-* (not) and the missing *chalant* (from the French *chaloir* “have concern for,” ultimately from Latin *calere* “be hot”^{ix}). Yet, despite this linguistic gap, the semantic equivalency remains in informal usage. English-language speakers would likely recognize a heated conversation as being diametrically opposed to, and mutually exclusive of, a nonchalant one; likewise, they would likely accept the reasoning that the conversationalists in the former hold a particular care for the subject matter, and a lack thereof in the latter. Both the immediate concept of ‘concern’ and the secondary concept of ‘heat’ remain within the contextual semantic background, despite the lack of the concurrent root expression within English itself.

Chalant is therefore an example of immunication - as is immunication itself. Given that immunication has been defined as a subjective concept from which symbolic derivations exist without a (previous) symbolic expression itself, it would be well thought of to test the assertion of a (supposedly) blank ‘slot’ within a systematic symbolic expression. To that end, the below table presents the theoretical structure from whence immunication can be derived:

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|---|--|---|
| Commune (co- ‘mutual’ + -une ‘one’) “To become one with” | One (-une ‘one’) | Immune (in- ‘not’ + -une ‘one’) “Resistant to being affected by” |
| Communion “in the state of communing” | Union (Une- ‘one’ + -ion ‘in the state of’) | Immunion “In the state of resistance to being affect by” |
| Community “a group sharing communion” | Unity “sharing the state of being united” | Immunity “sharing the state of being immune” |
| Communicate “The attempt to create oneness of thought” | Unicate/Unite/Unify “to make or become united” | Immunicate/Immunize “to make or become resistant to the effect of” |
| Communication “The act of having created oneness of thought” | Unication/Unification “The act of having created unity” | Immunication/Immunization “The act/state resulting from being immunicated/immunized” |
| Communicable “Able to be communicated” | Unicable/Unifiable “Able to be unified” | Immunicable/Incommunicado “unable to communicate” |

In the above table, the first column presents what one *does*, the third represents what one *is*, and the middle column presents the non-subjective state; the italicized primary words indicate concepts that currently lack formal expression, the bracketed addendums provide a semantic equivalency, and the quotes are a colloquial expression with the same semantic meaning.

As can be seen, many of the shared concepts, modified by co- or imm- (in-) already exist as discrete concepts; however, they are rarely seen as being directly related – largely because they are seen as: a) belonging solely and singularly to either the state of action or the state of being; b) being separate ‘subjects’, such as being legal or medical terminology, or; c) the ‘slot’ being already filled by a loanword, colloquialism, or regional equivalency. This results in possible expression being immunicated – placed outside of the framework of usage, despite any present utility.

As initially mentioned, what has been presented is but the broadest possible outline; a quick and dirty overview, colloquially speaking. A fuller examination of immunication would ideally be a multidisciplinary approach that would examine the sociohistorical inputs and sociopolitical outputs of language, with a specific focus on the psycholinguistic transition between the two; an approach this author currently lacks the unallocated time and academic resources to pursue.

ⁱ Trask, Robert Lawrence (1999). *Language: The Basics* (2nd ed.). Psychology Press

ⁱⁱ Chomsky, Noam (1957), *Syntactic Structures*, The Hague/Paris: Mouton

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} From Old English *hōd*, ‘hat’; see ^{vii}

^v From medieval Latin *abonnīs*, ‘headgear’; see ^{vii}

^{vi} From the Latin *cucullus*, ‘hood’; see ^{vii}

^{vii} Etymology as per the Oxford English Dictionary

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Ibid